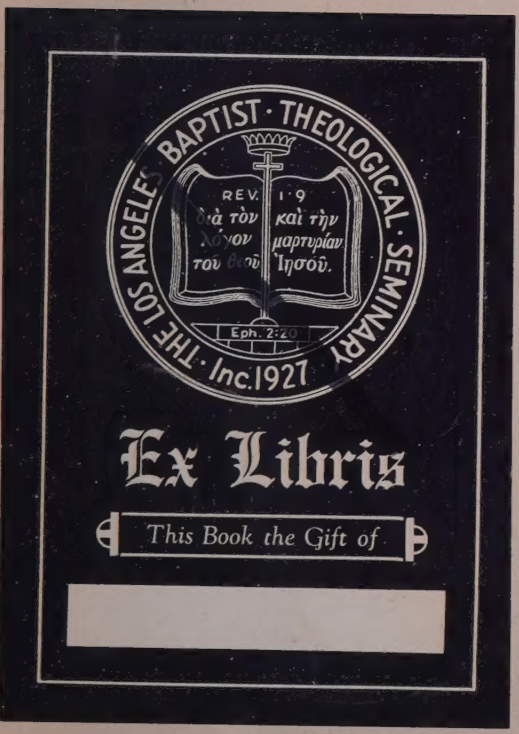
In The Refiner's Fire

Perry Wayland Sinks




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IN THE REFINER'S FIRE

The Problem of Human Suffering

"Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction."—*Isaiah 48:10.*

BY

PERRY WAYLAND SINKS, S. T. D.

Author of "Popular Amusements and the Christian Life," "About Money," "Whittlers of the Word of God," etc.

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TO

HENRY HOLCOMB

A MAN WHOSE APPREHENSION
OF DIVINE TRUTH AND HUMAN
AFFAIRS HAS BEEN A POTENT
FACTOR TO THE AUTHOR'S
CONVICTIONS WITHIN THESE
BLENDED REALMS THIS BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED

NOTE

This book was first named "The Problem of Human Suffering" and was given to the publishers without any knowledge that a book bearing the same or a similar title had ever been written. It was after his book was in type that the author came to know that an excellent volume of the identical title had been written by Vernon C. Harrington. "In the Refiner's Fire" was therefore substituted, retaining the original as the secondary title. Any similarity of treatment is explainable on the grounds of fidelity to subject and harmony of view-point.

THE AUTHOR.

Toledo, Ohio.

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THE PROBLEM STATED—
A SUFFERING WORLD

I

The Problem Stated—A Suffering World

TEXT: Romans 8:22. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

Job 5:6, 7. Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.

Job 14:1. Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.

John 14:1. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.

THE problem of human suffering has engaged the mind of man in all ages; upon it speculation and philosophy have ever busied themselves and with unsatisfactory and conflicting results. Suffering is the heritage of our existence in a finite world—the exposure of all material creation, including man. "The whole creation," says the Apostle, "groaneth and travaileth in pain together" (together with the children of God) "until now." He declares this to be a "groaning" and "travailing" world. The experience of suffering—physical, mental, and moral—is ever and everywhere our exposure, as it is the liability of all sentient existences.

The material world, whatever it may have been at first, is now in a state of mal-adjustment. The present derangement of the world is conceded by both scientist and theologian, neither of whom, however,

has attained unto ultimate truth even within his own respective realm, and each of whom has sometimes unwisely arraigned the other. The theologian has often misinterpreted what is recorded on the face of nature as well as misconstrued what is written on the pages of revelation. And the converse is true that the scientist has often mis-read and misapplied revelation and he has constantly been engaged in correcting his own 'proofs' as to the readings of nature. Calvinism, as representing, conceptually, the sterner system of religious belief, has often been arraigned in its teachings concerning God's government of the world and His relation to the problem of evil, physical and moral. These teachings are, that God's government of the world is wise and benevolent; that the consequences of ill-desert are certain, impartial, and just, though beyond finite comprehension; and that God is a being of infinite compassion and undying love.

The teachings of science, on the other hand, are, that the government of the universe is fortuitous; that the consequences of evil, both physical and moral, are visited regardless of, and are often contrary to desert; and that the operations of law are arbitrary and unfeeling, are without compassion, and unrelieved by hope of future compensation or harmonization. This is recognized by scientist and moralist—by philosopher and theologian. "Macaulay tells of the battlefield of Neerwinden, that the next summer after that frightful slaughter the whole country-side was densely covered over with scarlet poppies, which people beheld with

awe as a token of wrath in heaven over the deeds wrought on earth by human passions." "Any summer field, though mantled in softest green," says Prof. John Fiske, in application of this alleged fact, "is the scene of butchery as wholesale as that of Neerwinden and far more ruthless. The life of its countless tiny denizens is one of unceasing toil, of crowding and jostling, where the weaker fall unpitied by the way, of starvation from hunger and cold, of robbery utterly shameless and murder utterly cruel. . . . The early bird which went forth in quest of the worm, was lucky if, at the close of a day as full of strife and peril as knight-errant ever encountered, he did not, himself, serve as a meal for some giant foe in the gloaming." *

Whoever made this world, or if it made itself, whatsoever its long and eventful history, and whatever its thrilling denouement, it is, now, however we may philosophize about it or feign indifference to its importance, a world of suffering. As to the fact and reality of suffering, one has said: "Sorrow in the soul of man today, is as real as was the anguish in Gethsemane. The fire of human anguish is now as actual as the suffering that made Job curse the day of his birth, and smote his sympathizing friends dumb with heartache. . . . Pain is as real as pleasure; sorrow is as absolute as joy."

Jesus sought to comfort His disciples when their hearts were weighted down by anguish, with the words,

*Through Nature to God, pp. 62-64.

"Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." There was no disguising nor ignoring the fact that the apostles' hearts were troubled. In consequence of what He had just been telling them—how He must suffer and die and how they were all to be scattered as sheep having no shepherd to become the prey of devouring forces—a great shadow had fallen upon their hearts. In these dark hours, even, they still had Him to "believe in" and to trust, and thus their hearts could not be utterly desolate. For no heart, in any place or age or condition, that truly believes in Jesus Christ can ever be undone.

In amplification of this great truth it is the fact that, belief in Christ and the consciousness of His sustaining presence have been the refuge of the suffering and afflicted throughout the generations. And it is confirmed by observation and history that the soul is most inclined, or impelled, to flee to "ills it knows not of," when it denies to itself or rejects the consolations and hopes of the Christian faith.

Certainly, no mere intellectual attainments, while they may broaden the horizon of vision for the material universe, nor skepticism which walks in its own shadow, can buoy up the spirit of man amid the flood of whelming waters. Germany is the seat of renowned universities and leads the world in intellectual life; it leads the world also in rationalism and unbelief; and (on the authority of a writer in the *Bibleotheca Sacra*) Saxony, the very center of German intellectualism, leads the world also in the number of suicides

per thousand of the population; but in Ireland, where the people are poor, oppressed, and ignorant, though intensely religious, the number of suicides per thousand of the population is the lowest in the world. In these facts and conditions is to be seen, not the contrast between education and ignorance but the legitimate illustration and example of how a simple faith in Christ can sustain the heart of man amid the trials and adversities of this life—the contrast between the "walking by faith" and the disposition to walk by sight.

The apostles were not solitary in this fact and experience of trouble; for all human hearts are, or will be, sooner or later, and to a larger or smaller extent, troubled. Indeed, often, or in many instances, trouble seems to be the normal or at least the common state of man. And this is true, all apart from the question of its origin or the occasion of it. We all have observed, and have often remarked upon, the apparent disproportion of life's afflictions and the mystery of suffering. We often hear it said of individuals or of families that they seem to have more than their full share of trouble. Possibly! however, this seeming disproportion is, probably, more apparent than real. We do know, too, that some people have a better faculty of disguising the anguish of their hearts than others have; that some are less sensible by nature to the suffering of their fellow beings than others; and that some persons have a larger facility than others in magnifying and exploiting their sorrows and afflictions. And,

furthermore, that one may live long without encountering affliction is no assurance of continued immunity therefrom. We have observed it, alas, sometimes, that affliction and troubles are precipitated, after long delay, with aggravated persistency and power. Let no one of us be over-wise in fancying that we understand the whys and the wherefores thereof.

The indisputable fact is that the inequality and disproportion of earth's ills, as of earth's good, is inseparable from the present finite, and temporal, and imperfect state. The "note" of trouble is the minor strain heard throughout the ages and making up, it may be, the essential harmony of the universe. Life is not and cannot always be entirely congruous. The most charming music, as is well-known, is not composed of perfect chords. The imperfect chord has its place, and, if rightly employed, it contributes to the beauty and power of the musical composition. Perhaps it is true, at least in a sense it is true, as Aristotle long ago, caught an insight, that, "in nature there is nothing that is out of place or interpolated, as in an ill-constructed drama."

We may not accept the philosophy of it, but there is certainly food for thought in the utterance of Prof. Fiske: "Whatever exists is part of the dramatic whole, and this can quickly be proved. The goodness of the world—all that we love and praise and emulate—we are ready enough to admit into our scheme of things, and to rest upon it our belief in God. The misery, the pain, the wickedness, we would fain leave

out. But if there were no such a thing as evil, how could there be such a thing as goodness? Or to put it somewhat differently, if we had never known anything but goodness, how could we ever distinguish it from evil? How could we recognize it as good? How would its quality of goodness in any wise interest or concern us? This question goes down to the bottom of things, for it appeals to the fundamental conditions according to which conscious intelligence exists at all. Its answer will be likely to help us. It will not enable us to solve the problem of evil, enshrouded as it is in a mystery impenetrable by finite intelligence, but it will help us to state the problem correctly, and surely this is no small help."* These words are quoted only to enforce and emphasize our contention that ills and sorrows and afflictions are inseparable from a finite and temporal and imperfect world in which evil, both physical and moral, has had its rise and development. Mark you, we say, "inseparable from," and not essential to, a finite and temporal world.

Yes, the apostles' hearts were troubled. And our hearts are "troubled." "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." And it makes little difference, in reality, that our troubles are partly, or largely, or wholly, the creation of our own fears and apprehensions; they are real, nevertheless, and are the heritage of our finite state as well as a part of our bondage to iniquity. To be sure, if we could only see the out-

**Through Nature to God,* pp. 25-26.

come of many of the ills we apprehend and dread, we would know that our fears are groundless.

When the chosen few, who shared with their Lord the transfiguration on the mount, entered the cloud they trembled, but, afterwards, they knew that there was no occasion for their fears as their Master was with them. So we, also, in the "afterwards" of experience, often and often, come to realize that there was no reason for our trepidation as we entered the cloud. Indeed, has not many a cloud enveloped the shining raiment and the glorified countenance of our Lord?

Jesus saw the outcome of His own bitter anguish, and He, for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross. And Jesus saw the outcome of all the troubles of His apostles and disciples to the end of time, and He said to them, and He says to us, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me."

The night may be long and foreboding, and the cloud dark, and heavy, and forbidding, but the "morning cometh." Yes, the morning cometh, and the night passeth! In the august simplicity of creation's narrative, as given in the Hebrew, the inspired record is: "The *evening* was; and the *morning* was." That is to say, the night preceded the day—the darkness issued in the dawn, chaos in order. "The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

ERRONEOUS VIEWS OF SUFFERING

II

Erroneous Views of Suffering

TEXT: 2 Corinthians 4:17. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Genesis 42:36. And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: . . . all these things are against me.

Hebrews 12:6. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

THESE scriptures lead, in contrast if not directly, to the consideration of three erroneous views of human suffering:

1. That suffering is trivial and transient in its nature and duration—declared, by the inspired Apostle, to be "light" and of brief continuance.

This view is held both by those who would minimize, and affect to disregard, the fact and reality of suffering and by those, also, who would ignore the character and scope of suffering. The error of the Stoical philosophy in the earlier centuries, and relics of which have survived to the present time, was, that it minimized the fact and reality of suffering. The central and final aim of the Stoical philosophy was an all-ignoring apathy—a tranquillity undisturbed by either the experience of pleasure or the sense of pain. Stoicism sought to bring the individual into such a state that both desires and necessities would be ignored

and renunciated; where both would be treated with complete indifference. Stoicism said, "Renounce all things; accept with composure all that befalls; allow nothing to disquiet."

How like a religious speculation of our times and which has had a remarkable development, as many a false system has had, and which claims, furthermore, to be both scientific and Christian, but which ignores or pretends to ignore (on its speculative rather than its practical side) the existence and reality of pain and suffering and of disease and death. What is the answer, or is there an answer? There is an answer; and an answer in reason, as we believe, but that may be beyond most of us to give. The best answer to even "lying wonders" adapted to "deceive the very elect" is the wise counsel of Gamaliel, the Pharisee, "Let them alone"—or, in other words, "Wait." Zeno, the Stoical philosopher of the fourth century, held beyond polemical defeat, that there was no such thing as motion. "Walk," says Mr. Charles Wagner, author of *The Simple Life*—"Walk, if you would prove that there *is* such a thing as movement, and others will follow you. If you attempt to show them its existence" (i. e., the existence of motion) "by dialectics, a more subtle mind than yours may disprove by sophism that it has none." * Even so, the best answer for this modern religious imperialism is Time—"Time, that old justice that examines all offenders," and, soon or late, passes sentence, and from whose judgment there is no appeal.

**The Better Way*, p. 179.

Time is the solvent of many, or most, or all errors.

Others would seek to magnify divine grace by ignoring the character and scope of suffering. They quote the utterance of the Apostle, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment," as though it were easier to meet and endure affliction or suffering by glossing over its essential character. But we do not exalt divine grace by either magnifying our sins or by minimizing our suffering. From one point of view, alone, viz., the brevity of its duration as compared with "the eternal weight of glory," is this utterance of the Apostle justified and harmonized.

It is the testimony that comes from universal experience that the sufferings of this life are not trivial nor inconsequential but heavy and grievous. Suffering is disproportionate; and is inadequate, of itself, to accomplish anything for us but our own undoing. This is an agonizing world. O, the pain and anguish that attend humanity in its pilgrimage from the cradle to the grave! Its beginning a cry; its ending a gasp. Physical suffering, mental suffering, moral suffering—in which conscience is on the rack and the sense of guilt and ill-desert wring from the heart the bitter cry of agony—these are the heritage of our present state. Among the very last utterances of the great Russian novelist and humanitarian was this, "The world is full of suffering."

And so, notwithstanding the consolations of religion and the assurance of Holy Writ that they shall soon

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have an end, the sufferings of this present life are not inconsequential nor trivial but burdensome and oppressive. Fortunate it is for us that our vision of the sufferings of life is circumscribed to narrow bounds, being limited to the past and present, and that it cannot penetrate material walls, and darkened chambers, and hospital wards, else we should be overcome by the spectacle. Truly, as Bulwer has said, "The veil that shades the future was woven by the hand of Mercy." And the fabric of our finite limitations in which we are enveloped is a beneficent provision for our well-being.

2. It is held, too, that suffering is accidental and fortuitous, and must be endured without compensations or equivalents. This was the error of the patriarch Jacob when he declared in presence of oft-repeated afflictions and long-continued reverses, "All these things are against me."

It is, perhaps, our almost universal custom to regard suffering as falling within the scope of the accidental. We are too apt to look upon suffering, anywhere and anyhow as misfortune or bad fortune. We are too apt to regard pain, sickness and disease—the penalty for violated law—as happenings. Notwithstanding our belief in God and in His immanency, we will persist in removing Him far from the affairs of our daily, practical life, and rule Him out of the ills of our life, and thus persist in ourselves carrying the burdens which He wishes to share with us. How we will persist, and against reason and experience, to pre-judge happiness to be the product of circumstance or of environment,

or of favoring conditions which we come to regard as supremely desirable.

But circumstances and favoring conditions, while they do color and may heighten, can neither give nor take away the peace of God which is man's highest inheritance on earth. Earthly happiness, while the universal quest, is not the end of our existence and is not our supreme good. "Does man's peace lie in circumstances? Can events give it or take it away?" asks Mr. Wagner. He answers, "That they can is the old and fatal illusion."

The mistake of the patriarch Jacob was in looking upon his suffering and sorrows as accidental, and as inexplicable misfortune. At a given point of his life, looking back upon his experiences, he declared, as he veritably believed, "All these things are against me." Many another has said the same thing. As Jacob, at that time, saw it, accident and misfortune had followed one another in aggravating frequency to accomplish his undoing:—The loss of Joseph, the famine in the land, the retention of Simeon in a far country as security for the return of these messengers, the unyielding demand for Benjamin—all, all, accidental; all, all, misfortune! Unmistakably! But why did not Jacob go a step further in this sublime drama and see, in the seven years of plenty, over against the seven years of scarcity, and the exaltation of Joseph to be the Prime Minister of Egypt, accident and misfortune? Why? For two reasons: He lacked the broader view-point of added

years, and he lacked the vision of God. Jacob was not the man of faith, supremely, but the man of sense, and the man of sense, though he be the man of common sense, will not discover God's part and relation in a divine proceeding. And how we will persist in ruling out God from life's unsolved and unsolvable equations!

But over and over again, in the long history of the human family, it has come to the world and to us, individually, that the "accidental" at one stage becomes the purpose-revealing in another. In harmony with this thought, Paul says, "The things which happened unto me have fallen out, rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." So it often is, not alone in furthering the interests of the Gospel but the interests of our life. It was thus with the patriarch Jacob. The events and experiences that were regarded by him as accidental and calamitous were seen, in the end, to have been the ordering of divine wisdom, both for his own family and for all posterity. And Paul declares, "I take pleasure in infirmity, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake." And, how so? Not because Paul would choose, any more than we or any one would, these things for the woof of his life, but, rather for that extremity which they precipitate that becomes God's opportunity; "for when I am weak, then am I strong," he declares.

The Christian conception that underlies the universe is that God's government of the world and of the human family is paternal and providential, and hence that there are no "accidents" nor "happenings" and hence

that His government is infinitely wise and good. The "accidents" are parts of a plan all-embracing, and the "happenings" are parts of a providence all-protecting. "Sorrow," says Frederick W. Robertson, "is not an accident, occurring now and then—it is the very woof which is woven into the warp of life."

3. A third erroneous view is, that suffering is chastening and denotes the loss of God's favor. This is a common view of life's afflictions. Suffering and trouble may, indeed, be the "chastening" of the Lord, but they do not denote and are nowhere declared to be the evidence of God's disfavor; to the contrary, they betoken and assure God's love. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" is the inspired declaration. (Hebrews 12:6.)

We would not disguise any truth. Man must expect God's frown and displeasure, now and ever, so long as he lives a life of opposition to His will; for the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. I accept the estimate of Dr. Van Dyke: "It is better to know the saddest truth than to be blinded by the merriest lie. The sober, stern-browed pessimism which looks the darkness in the face is sounder and more heroic than the frivolous, fat-witted optimism which turns its back, and shuts its eyes, and laughs."* As Bishop Nicholson once said: "Pessimism is croaking, and to croak is like the frog, and smells of the swamp. But if a night-hawk be hovering around, then the croaking of a raven were better than the song of a nightingale."

**The Gospel for a World of Sin*, p. 18.

And so, while we would not disguise any truth, yet the fact of suffering is no evidence of the displeasure of God; to the contrary, suffering is as much an evidence of the favor of God as it is of His displeasure. At any rate, it is a fact with which we are all familiar that many of those who have come to enjoy the most of God's confidence have been called to pass through the severest suffering. Suffering, persecution, affliction, privation, and martyrdom have been the heritage of God's saints, throughout all history.

A life of the completest accord with the will of God contains no promise of immunity from suffering. The Bible nowhere encourages any soul with such an expectation. To the contrary, its assurance is, "In this world ye shall have tribulation." Its sublime promise is, that "Tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope." "These are they," answered the angel, in the Apocalypse, to the question concerning the white-robed throng, "that have come up through great tribulation," etc. We are told that Christ, as the "Captain of our salvation," was made "perfect through suffering." And the whitest souls that have ever graced this earth, the souls whose countenances have radiated the smiles of heaven and prefigured its glory, have been made such upon the rack of suffering. Shall we deny to the infinite One who loves each of us with a love of which Calvary's cross is the altitude and measurement the right and privilege to do with us and in us that which His infinite wisdom sees is best for us?

It is the beautiful lesson of the loom that the making of the plain, cotton cloth and the rich tapestry hangings is very much alike as to process; but there is a vast difference in the value and beauty of the respective products of the loom. The one is woven to a pattern, and becomes a work of art; but the other is only an orderly admixture of threads without variation in color or size, and for the purpose of utility only. Behold in this figure of the loom a parable of our life. The warp of our life are the days of our sojourn; the woof of our life is made up of the experiences which fill the measure of our days. And, if it should turn out that God should give, instead of the threads of colorless contentment, threads of somber, intermingling the bright and golden, to weave with each fleet movement of the shuttle, shall we not bless the Artist whose hand selected so well the separate shades and hues that the design, at last, when complete, shall be fit to ornament the temple of our God?

SUFFERING AND MORAL EVIL

III

Suffering and Moral Evil

TEXT: Job 4:7, 8. Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.

IT MAKES great difference, even in the Scriptures, as to who the speaker is. Words, on the lips of one person, may have a very different meaning from what they do when spoken by another. It is not altogether a matter of different inflection or emphasis but partly or largely a matter of personality. The Devil might tell us Gospel truth and yet we would likely be suspicious. Some of the writers of the Bible wrote or spoke as the oracle of God; some, in the words which man's wisdom teacheth; and still others wrote or spoke without wisdom at all, as the fool did when he said in his heart: "There is no God." This was said by the fool, who illustrated his saying by his practice in that he lived without recognizing God's claims.

The text sounds like the apostolic utterance, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." But while similar in sound, there is a vast difference in sense, in the respective utterances. The statement of the Apostle does not purport to be grounded in observation (our observation and even our experiences, at

best, are faulty and inadequate) but in the revelation of the mind of God. The utterance in the text, to the contrary, was a deduction from observation—from a very limited observation and under unfavorable conditions. It was based on the perception of the speaker—"as I have seen"—but the "sight" of this man or of any one was and is a very unreliable datum for a sweeping or universal conclusion, as the speaker in this instance found out to his discomfiture before this sublime controversy, which is drawn out for twenty-four chapters of this wonderful book, is concluded.

We need to bear it in mind that vision, physical or mental, and to any one, or in any age, is a defective instrument for acquiring knowledge: and for the reason that we look upon things and truth at the angle of finite limitations. To illustrate: If you place a straight stick in a body of clear water at any position varying from the vertical, you will be ready to testify that the stick is broken at the water's edge, if you rely only on your sense of sight. The reason for this aberrancy of vision is two-fold, and exists in the angle at which and the medium through which the stick is seen. Even so, a pure self-interest and a holy ambition may become the crystalline media through which the straight lines of truth are deflected. God, alone, sees all things from the vertical position, looking down into, and through and through, all things. To God's all-discerning vision nothing is seeming, and there are no limitations. The observation of one being only—the infinite and all-wise God—is worthy of acceptance

as absolutely just and right. The Apostle, in the scripture, "Whatsoever a man soweth," etc., speaks not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth but with the wisdom of God. An attempt on man's part to declare final judgment on any matter whatsoever, or at any time, implies what Bishop Butler called "the infinitely absurd supposition that we know the whole of the case."

Our text presents a view of the problem of human suffering which has been most persistent throughout history and which, at the same time, is most erroneous and harmful, viz., that suffering and affliction are indicative of personal sin. This was the insinuation of Eliphaz, thrown in the face of the patriarch Job at the time of his all-but unbearable affliction—"who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?"

This error did not cease with those who first gave it expression. To the contrary, the implication or argument that suffering is evidential of sin, or sins, has ever been astonishingly near in human thought. Such a conviction has the force, almost, of a natural intuition. It was the assumption of the three friends of Job who came, ostensibly, to comfort him in his affliction, (but in reality they blamed) that his personal suffering was prima facie evidence of his guilt. Hence, they called upon him to "repent of his wickedness." They argued and reasoned, and with unanswerable logic, that, of course, Job must be a great sinner, else he would not suffer so. The greatness of his affliction

was to them, the incontrovertible evidence of his sin and wrong-doing. Of course! Unmistakably! "Even as I have seen," urges Eliphaz, "they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same."—"I have seen it!" O the conceit of Eliphaz! This conceit has ever been perpetuated. "I have heard a Christian friend suggest to a mother, sitting white as ashes by her dead baby," says Dr. Charles Cuthbert Hall, "perhaps God saw you loved the child too much, and so He took it from you." O how the character of God has been defamed in the name of the Christian faith! God's character has sometimes been made to appear, if not "immoral," at least, "unmoral."

The patriarch Job, while unable to confute the sophistry of Eliphaz, *knows* that it is false and resents the implication. Job was willing to concede—he does concede—that the evils he suffered were, indeed, related to, but were not the direct results of personal sin. He looked deeper than did his accusers and answered their insinuations and therein disproved their theodicy, by the sublime question of faith, "Shall the Lord send good and not evil?" "Evil is good, if God sends it," is his sublime rebuttal of their specious logic and cogent reasoning. He affirmed, persistently, even against the observation of his friends, and against his own experience at the time, his reliance on, and trust in God, notwithstanding all their cruel insinuations—"I know that my Vindicator liveth!" He believed, though without evidence or ground, as yet, that, sometime, somehow, and somewhere, all would be made

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plain; and declared his confidence in God in the words, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him!"

Let us follow this thought somewhat further. The conception of retributive justice, is deeply imbedded in universal convictions. There is much in experience and observation, and in history to sustain this conviction. In the long run, and, often, in the short run, "our sins will find us out." It has passed into the practical, proverbial wisdom, and is generally but not always true, that "murder will out." This, perhaps, is the foundation for this deeply seated impression that the suffering of life is evidential that retributive justice runs throughout human experience. There is a large measure of truth in this conviction, as there is in all convictions that are universal. The error and the harmfulness of the view is in its application to specific and concrete examples that come under observation, as in the instance of the text.

It is true—unmistakably and scientifically true—that suffering, all suffering, is evidential of sin, somewhere and sometime,—of violated law,—but let us not perpetuate the mistake, made all through the ages, in connecting any case of specific suffering with particular or subjective sins. And yet how generally has this mistake been made, and is still made!

It is a mistaken and pernicious view that suffering and affliction by either worldly people or the good is God's chastisement for their sins. Dr. Hall asks, "Is there any ground in the New Testament for affirming that God ever punishes men with physical or material

calamity in the present life?" And he answers, "None whatever!" In luminous exposition, he says, further: "The civil law punishes men, or some men, for their sins in this life. God does not. If a bad man breaks a natural law, he will suffer, but not because he is a bad man. If a good man breaks natural laws, he will suffer just as much as if he were bad. If a child is snatched away from a worldly family by sudden death, it is not because the family is worldly, but because the child caught the prevailing fever. Perhaps it caught it from the little child next door, who belonged to a most holy and devout family, and who caught the fever and died. Side by side in their beds, side by side in their graves, lie the dear little children; two homes in mourning; yet neither one family nor the other is being punished for its sin. . . . Sickness is not judgment, death is not retribution; they are purely natural phenomena issuing from causes more or less traceable. Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth before I, a sinner, dare to say of other sinners weeping by their dead, 'God is punishing them for their sins.' Tomorrow I may be weeping by my dead—and what then?"*

It was the common notion held by the Jews at the time of Christ, and perhaps, always, that suffering and calamity were the direct punishment sent of God for sins committed. And people, good people and bad, have assumed and presumed to trace the connection between suffering and sin. The apostles, you remem-

**Does God Send Trouble?* pp. 34, 35.

ber, asked our Lord, upon the occasion of His restoring sight to one born blind, "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus corrected their false and derogatory insinuations, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents," meaning, not that they had never sinned, but, rather, that the calamity which was upon this person at birth and which had accompanied him throughout his life until then, was not in consequence of subjective or personal sin—either his own or his parents' sin. The cause of this affliction (and every affliction and calamity has its cause) was not moral but physical.

Christ, upon another occasion only voiced the sentiments which were universal when He asked, concerning the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? Or, those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?" His hearers would have had but one answer to His questions; it would have been in the affirmative, and would have been very positive. It would have been, "We know that it was because of their exceeding sin—for," in the words of Eliphaz to Job, "who ever perished, being innocent?" Christ's answer to His own question was, "I tell you, nay." His assurance, (and it is the highest authority) evermore, is that suffering and calamity are not to be taken as evidence, necessarily, of personal sin.

Christ would declare that the logic or the conceit that would infer guilt and sin from the fact of suffering is both unreasonable and false. It is also, an insinuation against the character of God. When the Apostle Paul was shipwrecked on his journey to Rome, after he and his fellow voyagers had gotten safely to land, in gathering sticks of wood for a fire, a viper fastened on Paul's hand, and the natives of the island at once said among themselves, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live." The evidence, incontrovertible, to these natives was in the fact that Paul had been stung by the viper. Their false logic was exposed and negatived when they saw that Paul suffered no harm.

These erroneous notions still obtain and are widespread. We had conversation, once, with a lady, who was voluble in expressing her belief that the misfortunes which had befallen her with distressing frequency were sent by the Lord in consequence of her wandering from Him. No; not sent of the Lord, though resulting, no doubt, from infractions of His natural laws; and these same misfortunes might have turned to her good if she had profited by their monitions and invitations.

It was said of the Messina desolation, the San Francisco and Martinique horrors, the Galveston and Johnstown calamities, that they, each and all, were "judgments" sent upon these cities because of their immoralities—"Judgments!" The great fire of Chicago was

looked upon by many, at the time, as a visitation of judgment, and as sent in consequence of the exceeding wickedness of that city. But our assumed wisdom in discerning moral causes for physical evils will always involve us in perplexities of logic, as in the case of the great Chicago fire. It is said to have been the fact that the fire was checked on a street where there was a row of large distilleries, that escaped the fire, while, on the other side of the same street, there were a number of churches which were destroyed. Whether this was the actual fact or not, it does illustrate the limitations of our wisdom when we assume or presume to know what is forever beyond the range of finite intelligence. Most astounding and egotistical, though in the opposite direction, is the assumption of a prominent evangelist: "I was in a big hotel in San Francisco just before the terrible earthquake. A few days after I left the hotel it was a crumpled mass of stone and mortar. The Lord would not allow the earth to quake when I was in the city. Then again I was in Galveston, Texas, but a few days before the flood which carried thousands to their graves—watery graves. The bridled terrors that hurled the tempest against the city were behind the winds and waves when I was there, and guarded me against their terrible fury." (!)

The pernicious assumption of superior or infallible information concerning "judgments" is always liable to involve the perplexities witnessed in the instance of the evangelist who prayed with great fervor during a thunderstorm that the lightning might smite the judgment-

deserving saloon of the town, but the bolt fell, instead, upon the sanctuary where the revival meeting was in progress. And if any one instances the burning of the Iroquois Theater, with its hundreds of fashionable and wealthy people which some pre-judge to be ready for the fiery indignation, as an example of retributive justice, then we ask, How about the hundreds of innocent, joyous, happy children, members of a Christian Sunday-school, whose young lives went out in the holocaust of the *General Slocum,* some months later? How can retributive justice be seen in this latter case? It can not. It is effrontery of self-conceit for the finite mind to affirm a judgment in either case; or, in any case. And, moreover, a New York grand jury found a true bill against certain officers of the steamboat company for criminal negligence. That negligence and not God was the sin and cause in that great calamity; and that negligence was indictable and punishable.

Sin may have a direct connection with many a given case of suffering; but no mortal man can indicate, unmistakably or assure infallibly, what the connection is. That which we think we see, may be or may not be the connection—probably is not the connection at all. Modesty of opinion, and, especially, of assertion, is most becoming, in all such cases. Rather than to discover the impenetrable causes, it better becomes us to seek for the wholesome lessons of suffering. Above all things, let us not make our God an unfeeling and atrocious God. "It is better to know nothing about a subject," says Dr. Van Dyke, "than to know some-

thing about it which is not so. It is wiser to stand in silent awe before the secret things which belong to God, than it is to adventure rashly among them and discover truths which do not exist."*

In saying this much upon this erroneous and pernicious view of suffering, let us not be misunderstood. The view which has persisted throughout history that suffering of every kind is in relation to sin, is, certainly, by no means false. For, with the advent of sin came its trail of consequences; "came," as says Dr. Hall, "all sorrow, all perversion of instincts and lusts, all confusion of interests, all strife and warfare, all sickness with its incredible train of infirmities, all debasement and derangement of the intellect, all degeneration of vitality, and that supreme, that heroic, that last catastrophe—death." It has been asserted in truth, "Trace all suffering back to its origin, and it is found in sin";—but you may have to go a long way to find its origin. Early in God's tutelage of the Israelitish nation, He declared, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." The converse is true, that, Trace all sin, or any sin, on to its issue and it will be found to eventuate in suffering. Both these propositions are true, and are not to be lost sight of. Milton, with true conception, sang:

> Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden.

**Straight Sermons*, p. 224.

But while it is unmistakably true that the ultimate or final cause of all suffering is sin, it is also true that the sin which is the occasion of specific suffering may be remote, both in time and cause, and therefore it is beyond the capacity of the finite mind to trace. And, furthermore, personal sin may have no connection at all with a given case of suffering. It is the sad observation, and our bitter experience, sometimes, that the sins of one person or of other persons may eventuate in and be the direct cause of the sorrow and suffering of another or of others. Many of you know of men and women doomed to perpetual confinement in asylums, hospitals, and infirmaries because of the sins of others, and not on account of their own sins. You know persons who have lost limbs, organs of the body, or health, and who, for the balance of their lives, respectively, are consigned to a condition of dependence and misery because of the acts and sins of others. You have seen innocent children sentenced by nature's court to endure diseases the most loathsome, and the most burdensome infirmities, while others are consigned to a lifelong conflict with forces of evil in their own members, as the result and the heritage of another's sin. To say, as is said in the name of the so-called Christian Science, that "We need not suffer for another man's wrong—for another's greed, dishonesty, avarice, or selfish ambition," is of precisely the same character as it would be to say that black is white in an expectation that any person of normal intelligence and moral equipoise would or could accept the statement.

O, the appalling mal-adjustment of suffering! Who suffers most, the man who narcotizes his conscience, blunts his sensibilities of body and soul, through drink, or the dependent family robbed of his protection and care and love? Which? The embruting process, in such a case has seared his sensibilities, so that his friends and family feel a thousand pangs to his one, or to his none. If each one suffered for his own sins, only, this problem of human suffering would not be so difficult, or incapable, of analysis.

The fact is that good men as well as bad suffer. And good men and women often suffer most while striving for the most perfect obedience to the divine will. To be a true prophet of God, in all ages, has been "to be stoned." Suffering and hardship and afflictions come while in the path of duty, and, sometimes, in consequence of pursuing that path. It is a slander upon virtue and integrity to allege that suffering is evidence of personal sin. If it is, then the leaders in the ranks of progress, the apostles of our Lord, the martyr-host of the ages, and Jesus Christ, Himself, were each and all, sinners above those "upon whom the tower in Siloam fell." These all trod a rough and thorny path.

The converse of all this is true that bad men and women often suffer least; or surely, this is often true of the advanced stages of iniquity. A notorious pirate, executed for crimes on the high seas, confessed that, when he had committed his first crime conscience was on the rack and made a hell within his bosom, but at the last he could commit murder and lie down and

sleep as peacefully as a babe upon its mother's breast. The course of some bad men and women is most free from pain, and their consciences have become so seared by their sinful career as to be almost or quite incapable of being afflicted at all with remorse.

No; oh no, suffering, here, whatever it may be hereafter, is not an indication and evidence of personal sin.

SUFFERING AND CHARACTER

IV

Suffering and Character

TEXT: Hebrews 12:9-11. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

THERE is one other erroneous view concerning this great problem to which we would direct attention before considering, specifically, the relation of suffering to character; and which is, that suffering is, *per se,* a virtue, or a good, and that it results in and brings about, if not necessarily at least commonly, a refinement or an enrichment of the sufferer's character. The Mohammedan *dervish* and the *fakir* of India ascribe great virtue and expiatory value, as did the Baal-worshippers of Elijah's time (1 Kings 18:28) to self-inflicted torture. And there are enlightened and devout Christian people also who attribute virtue and value to suffering.

The truth, doubtless, is that suffering may result in either good or ill, and that it does result in good or ill according to the spirit in which it is received. This is the precise teaching of our text,—"No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous;

nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto"—whom? or, indiscriminately? No, not indiscriminately, but—*"unto them which are exercised thereby."* And unto such, alone. Let no one of us for a moment suppose that suffering is, in and of itself, virtue or good; we should rather call it evil, always evil; only, we should discriminate between moral and physical evil in the fact and experience of suffering. It is doubtless the correct estimate that regards suffering as *un-moral,* that is to say, as being neither moral nor immoral. Sickness, pain and death are natural phenomena; they exist in the present order of things, are a part of the condition and constitution of the world; and are neutral as to moral quality.

It is true, however, that suffering, or physical evil, may produce or issue in good; it often does; but whether it does or does not eventuate in good depends entirely upon the disposition and spirit of the sufferer. The Gospel, even, the purest fountain of good influences, is declared by the Apostle to be either "a savour of life unto life, or a savour of death unto death," and the disposition of the hearer determines whether of life or of death. In like manner, suffering becomes either an influence for good or for ill, according to the spirit in which it is received. "The same sun that melts the wax hardens the clay," as in the well-known maxim. Said that brilliant preacher of Brighton, Frederick W. Robertson: "Sorrow is in itself a thing neither good nor bad; its

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value depends on the spirit of the person on whom it falls. Fire will inflame straw, soften iron, or harden clay; its effects are determined by the object with which it comes in contact. Warmth develops the energies of life, or helps the progress of decay. It is a great power in the hothouse, a great power also in the coffin; it expands the leaf, matures the fruit, adds precocious vigor to vegetable life; and warmth, too, develops with tenfold rapidity the weltering process of dissolution."

As we should guard against the view that suffering is evidential of sin, that it betokens the divine displeasure, or that it is a fact to be viewed and treated with Stoical indifference, so we should also guard against the equally misleading notion that suffering is a virtue, or is productive of or results in a refinement of the sufferer's character. It does not, necessarily. It perhaps more commonly results otherwise. Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, the author and nerve specialist, has taken issue in print, with the theory of suffering that it necessarily sweetens and refines the character and disposition. He is reported as saying: "In all my experiences as a physician I have not seen more than a dozen men or women who have been improved morally by long-continued suffering. Acute illness, and illness which brings the patient close to death, often has a beneficial effect upon the disposition, but I can not agree with the assertion which we frequently hear made in the pulpit that suffering is usually the means of refining. I have seen a few

isolated cases in which it was so, but it is not the rule, by any means. The chronic invalid is almost invariably selfish and peevish, and it is a hard task to find a nurse who can stand the strain of such a service. One of these chronic invalids—a woman—" (it would have been even worse, perhaps, had it been a man) "told me recently that she had worn out the manners of two nurses. I didn't wonder, she had worn out mine, and I called on her only occasionally."

But there are many instances where suffering and afflictions do refine and where they reveal and brighten character. I know a young lady living in a remote part of a Southern state, and almost incapable of movement without attendance, "shut in" and "shut out" from most that appeals so attractively and persistently to the young heart, and yet who, by the very limitations placed upon her by her physical condition, and out of what would be to most young people "a valley of Baca," is to be reckoned with as a factor for the progress of the kingdom of God within that state. And I knew of a young man in a Northern state, who, for many years, had sojourned in the valley of suffering, and without hope that it would ever be otherwise in this world, and yet who sang, as he suffered and waited for his release:—

> Long have I sinned, O Lord, forgive,
> Stretch forth Thy hand and let me live.
> Long have I wandered far from Thee,
> Lost in the night; I can not see
> The way to go, O guide Thou me.

My sinfulness and each defect
I feel at last, Saviour direct
My faltering feet; far have I strayed
From the right way, by sin dismayed
I turn to Thee, my Guide, for aid.

My wilfulness I now repent,
Henceforth, dear Lord, I am content
To follow Thee; O be my Guide,
Protect me through the desert wide,
In safety keep me, by Thy side.

Have pity on my loneliness,
Comfort and help in my distress.
My faith is weak, the journey long,
I lean on Thee, O Thou Most Strong,
Support me, keep from going wrong.

I can not see the path I tread,
I know not what awaits ahead,
Nor fear, dear Lord, to Thee the way
Is known, e'en to the end; I lay
My hand in Thine, lead me, I pray.

There are such instances, scattered here and there, but they are exceptions to our common observation.

Instead of suffering being a virtue, it is, or much of it is (hard as it may seem to declare it) the legitimate fruitage of conduct, the direct consequence of ill-desert. Mr. Bob Burdette says, incisively: "There is no virtue in mere suffering. There is no goodness inherent in pain. Had there been nothing in the Cross but the human figure, writhing in mortal agony, the spectacle had been repulsive." The suffering of

that man who has destroyed the noblest faculties of his soul and made himself a miserable wreck by strong drink, or by any debasing evil, is not virtue, and never can be. Not even the forgiving love of God can efface from heaven's record the fearful blot of wasted resources and debased powers, and which God designed and desired might be employed unto His glory. No, no; suffering, in and of itself, is not virtue.

It is an admission which in view of the limitations of our mental capacity, we are compelled to make that much of the suffering of this life is obscure, and that the whys and wherefores thereof are past our finding out. And, too great understanding of this problem is to be viewed with suspicion. That was the trouble with the three friends of Job; with the young man, Elihu, who knew all about God's purposes, and with all who, like him, "darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge." It is as Wordsworth says,

> Suffering is permanent, obscure, and dark,
> And has the nature of infinity.

But while this problem contains mysteries that will always baffle the profoundest philosopher who undertakes to explore its depths, yet in certain portions of our journey in this forbidding valley, we tread on solid ground. We may not know *all* about it but we can know some things about it.

At this point in our discussion we would, parenthetically and briefly, direct attention to the three kinds of suffering known to the human family and known also, and to the fullest extent, to the Son of God.

1. Physical suffering. The suffering of man as a material being is greatly disproportionate, inexplicable to human philosophy, separate from the law of desert, and is shared in by all sentient beings; for, as declares the apostle, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together" (together with the children of God) "until now."

2. Sympathetic suffering. As measured by varying human sensibilities and temperaments, sympathetic suffering is also greatly disproportionate. It is this kind of suffering that the mother feels when she would gladly endure, if it were possible, the agony of her child. It was this kind of suffering that wrung from King David's heart the bitter cry, "O my son Absalom, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" It was this that Jesus felt, when He wept over the obdurate city of His love, and when He "groaned in spirit" at the grave of Lazarus in manifestation of His tender sympathy. And it is this that still causes the hand-clasp to tighten and the tears to fall for our sorrowing friends in token and evidence of fellow-suffering with one another. Lamartine has said, that "Next to his own blood, the best thing that any man has to give is his tears."

3. Vicarious suffering. This is suffering on account or on behalf of others. Vicarious suffering has a limited application in the lives of us all; but it has its divine, and holy, and infinite application and manifestation, alone, in the Son of God who, not only "took our infirmities" upon His sacred person, but, more than this, "bore our sins on the accursed tree." On Him "was laid the iniquity of us all." Behold Him in the Garden and on the Cross, suffering and dying, not for His own sins but for your sins and mine that He might present us unto God. He knew no remorse for wrongs that He had done—for He did no wrong—and yet He suffered as though He were the greatest malefactor of the world. It was vicarious suffering that He endured, voluntarily, in the place and on behalf of sinful man. This is the Scripture teaching.

We are now brought to inquire, specifically, into the relation of suffering to character, and involving the two-fold preliminary question: What is character and how is character produced? Without consulting the dictionaries, we answer, Character, i. e. to say, good character may be defined as the sum of the qualities of mind and heart which make up or enter into the noble personality and without regard to the recognition, or the lack of recognition, of these qualities by other persons. And we should distinguish, too, between character and reputation. Character is what a man is; reputation is what a man is popularly held to be. In other words, as some one has said,

"Character is what we are in the dark; reputation is what we are in the light."

And, concerning the development of character, it is a truth which has a wide acceptance in human experience and observation that character may be produced by and through very disproportionate and apparently inadequate means. It has been a matter of remark, long, to the wise and good, that adversity is a school; that it contains the hard curriculum by which many of the noblest lessons of life are learned; though it is a truth that no one of his own choice, seeks this curriculum; or, if there are those who, Tolstoy-like, do, they are the conspicuous exceptions to the almost universal rule.

From the foregoing answer to this double question we may advance to the proposition that suffering sustains a fourfold relation to character:

1. Suffering, in many instances, reveals character. Mark, we do not now say that suffering produces character, but the very different thing that suffering often reveals character. Real nobility of character often awaits some circumstance or experience or ordeal to bring it forth into the light of day and cause it to shine. And that circumstance may be comparatively trifling and that experience or ordeal may be of brief duration. In a serial story of a popular magazine there is a colloquy recorded between two leading characters concerning the changes that come in life, both in sentiment and in the conceptions of the mind: "One changes with years," says the chief

speaker; "but I did not suppose that one could change in a few months like that. One changes with experience—above all with that kind which people generally call—suffering. That's the great Alchemist; and He often transmutes our silver into gold." Even suffering discloses and brightens the qualities that constitute character. The crucible is a device of the laboratory by means of which the nature and quality of the materials subjected to its fires are discovered. In like manner, suffering is sometimes a retort by which character, good or bad, is revealed.

Let us remember, that character is not invariably bound up with happiness, nor with the pursuits of happiness. It has passed into a proverb that "Nothing succeeds like success;" but in not a few instances nothing succeeds like success—except failure. This proverb, which is exalted as the ruling ideal of the age, is based upon a wrong notion of what constitutes a successful career and a subordination of the "how" of success.

Many a worthy effort which has been regarded a failure has yielded important results in character, and has contributed, as well, to future triumphant achievement. Often has it been so. Inventions have their experimental and trial-stage in which progress is often made through repeated failures. Few discoveries within the realms of science or history, have been purely accidental or independent of antecedent blunders or set-backs. Thus, conspicuously, was it with Lieutenant Peary in his efforts to reach

the North Pole. Through oft-repeated disappointments he came to the goal of his ambition. All his preceding failures had contributed to his final and distinguished achievement and contributed also to his character. Mr. Walter Wellman writes of his so-called failure to sail the air-ship *America* over the Atlantic, upon his first attempt and without preliminary trial: "It is always worth while to strive, to venture, to work, to dare . . . to widen the frontiers of knowledge and achievement. It is worth while to try, and fail, because failure often teaches as much as success." And, we may add—what is more important—failure, often, contributes to character-building. It is a mistaken view that character results from external conditions, or is produced by the combinations of pleasurable experiences. Character may be attained all apart from these; may exist where all these are absent or lacking.

Another truth of wide acceptance is that an essential thing in the development of character is self-knowledge. It was inscribed on the walls of the Delphian temple, attributed to Solon, "Know thyself." And it has been said that "The proper study of mankind is man." Now there is no time nor condition wherein we may obtain such a revelation of ourselves —of our natural weakness, of our absolute helplessness, and of our finite limitations and exposures—as in the periods of suffering, and which, in turn, become ministrations to self-knowledge, and thus to character.

2. Suffering supplies, in unnumbered instances, elements of wholesome discipline in the school of life. Here is where the "chastening," spoken of in our text, applies in particular. It is not a question whether the chastening is desired, or welcomed, or whether it is regarded wise and good by the subject of it, for it is not natural to so regard it. As a fact of experience, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous"—*is* "not joyous, but grievous." As a fact, chastening is that which every one of us cries out against and prays to be delivered from. It is in the "afterward" and not at the present that the gracious fruits of discipline are revealed in the character.

It is a truth, though not the whole of the truth, that life is a school—a process of education. And since this is so, discipline, by the great Teacher, who is infinitely wise and good, is a reasonable accompaniment; although discipline is seldom if ever a desired element from the standpoint of the pupil. It is only in the "afterward" that he realizes the wisdom and the value of the processes and restrictions, the limitations and penalties, put upon him. Discipline in the school of life comes to us through losses, pain, privation and deprivation, rather than, or as well as, through gains or by reason of our exemption from the ills of life. If we can come to feel that these are imposed or permitted by the Infinite Teacher then will we know that they are wise and good. In illustration of this truth, Plato makes Critias say to Socrates con-

cerning Charmides, "The headache will be an unexpected benefit to my young relation, if the pain in his head compels him to improve his mind."* And Janet puts the same truth concerning pain, thus: "It is known to be often a salutary warning, a necessary stimulus to human activity, an incitement to progress of the human race."†

It is a part of the process of making the ordinary "print cloth," or "calico," to run the dampened cloth over a red-hot roller in order to singe off the tiny fiber of its surface so as to leave the fabric smooth and clean and prepare it thereby to receive the impressions of color from the after processes of manufacture. Suffering may, and often does, prepare the heart to receive the impressions which the great Artist-Teacher would make upon the character. There is an analogy in this illustration to the statement which has been made that "The Hebrew children lost nothing in the fiery furnace but the cords that bound them." "Sanctified afflictions," said Dr. Dodd, "are spiritual promotions." Some birds sing their most beautiful notes, only after their eyes are put out. And some one has said, "There is a great want in those Christians who have never suffered." Savonarola thought that the disappointment, misfortune, and sorrow that had come to him had brought him death, but, in reality, "the grief that circled his brow with a crown of thorns was also that which wreathed it with the splendor of immortality." The Psalmist exclaimed with emphasis: "It

*Jowett's Plato, 2:11. †Final Causes, pp. 308, 309.

is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes. Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." As stars may be seen from the bottom of a deep well when they cannot be discerned from the top of a mountain, so adversity often brings stars into view that prosperity obscures. "Assuming, as we all do," says Prof. John Fiske, "that the attainment of the higher life is in itself desirable, our minds can not remain utterly inhospitable toward things, however odious in themselves, that help toward the desirable end."*

In harmony with all this did Paul receive, along with his commission as an apostle, the assurance of suffering. Ananias was informed by the Lord, as he demurred from going to Saul, "Behold, I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." This meant, we think, not that the Lord intended to afflict him with sore punishment for his great sins, but, rather, that suffering, afflictions, bonds, imprisonments, and the like, were to contribute, in the contrasts and contradictions of experience, to his highest qualifications for service to the Master who, Himself, had become the "Captain of his salvation through suffering."

3. Suffering is a gracious bestowment—a "gift" of God for the enrichment of character. Character is both a negative and a positive attainment. It grows as the statue and the tree, respectively, grows—by a process of elimination, in the one case, chipping off,

**Through Nature to God*, p. 68.

bit by bit, until the "angel in the marble" is revealed; or, by a process of acquisition, in the other, taking up by absorption, assimilation, and transformation, from many and different sources, until the ripened fruit hangs, rich and beautiful and nutritious, on the branches.

It is a truth which we are slow to recognize that in proportion as either sufferings or joys (and it makes small difference which) bind closer to God, they will bring their contribution to character. In the light of this fact the Apostle Paul comforted the suffering Philippians with the assurance, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." And, later in this epistle, he declares, concerning himself, that he counts all things but loss, that he may win Christ—that he may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and "the fellowship of his suffering." To suffer for Christ "a gift!" and a "fellowship!" How different this estimate from our selfish views of suffering, which prompts us, rather, to look upon it as evil, or as accidental, or as hiding the face of the Father! It was because his suffering, privation, and afflictions brought him into closer relation to his divine Lord, he could declare: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God," etc. Many of us, no doubt, can say, "some things;" a few of us, perhaps, can say, "most things;" but the Apostle to the Gentiles could say, "All things—work together for good."

We are dull scholars in learning that "tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." We rebel against the process, and because it hurts—and none of us like to be hurt! As well may we reasonably think of the vine rebelling against and complaining of the gardener's pruning, or of the silver objecting to the fires of the smelting furnace, as for us to repudiate the knife and the fire that bring the larger fruitfulness in life and the clearer image of the Master upon the character!

4. In these different subjective or personal ways is the relation of suffering to character manifest; there is still another way, and that objectively or outwardly, in which suffering is related to character, and that is in service to mankind inspired or brought about by suffering. Suffering makes or ought to make, us more mindful of the unity and solidarity of the human family. The natural tendencies and inclinations of us all are toward self-centered and self-circumferenced lives—toward lives of ease and complacency.

We hear, sometimes, of the altruistic element of the human character, but the altruistic quality or temperament is not a native endowment; it is, rather, an acquired grace. Theoretically, we are willing to concede that humanity is a brotherhood; but in our innate or acquired selfishness we are inclined to resent and repudiate the obligations of the relationship. Suffering and sorrow bring us to realize, often, and poignantly, our common kinship to all mankind. That which made Christ the comfort of the sorrowing above

all others was that divine capacity of sympathy which enabled Him to be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. We may not know—we can not know—we may not desire to know—how to sympathize with the sorrowing and suffering ones of earth, until we, ourselves, have suffered. We may not know—we can not know—how to add sweetness to another's cup of sorrow, until we, ourselves, have drunk its bitterness. Somehow, Jesus, who has become "the Captain of our salvation" was "made perfect through suffering."

As we shall never know how many hearts beat in kindred sympathy with us until a great sorrow or suffering shall disclose it, so, too, we shall never be able, no matter how much we may desire to do so, to comfort the troubled heart, at least never so well, until we, ourselves, are sorrow smitten. Said a young woman, who had suffered because of the cruel judgment, of some of her companions, but who was clung to by a true friend, "It was worth suffering much to have disclosed the strength and devotion of such a friend!"

Through the lesson of our own suffering and the new sense of the value of loving sympathy which the hour of anguish makes manifest, we are fitted, or, are better fitted—though not of our own choosing—to minister comfort to the suffering ones of the earth, and thus we may come to the deeper realization of human brotherhood.

SUFFERING AND DESTINY

V

Suffering and Destiny

TEXT: John 13:7. Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.
Romans, 8:18. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

OUR inquiries have now brought us face to face with an attempted solution of the problem of human suffering. It is not a begging of the question to say that the most we hope to accomplish will be to throw some broken and scattering rays of light—reflected from the Word of God and witnessed unto by human experience—upon the dark background of an, otherwise, insoluble mystery. "The key to the world and to human destiny," says Rev. Charles Wagner, "is too colossal for man to lift."

There are two lines of reflection which, taken together, throw some light upon this tremendous problem; they are: The sequence of human events, and the conception of a future existence in which the inequalities and mal-adjustments of this life shall be reduced and harmonized.

First. Much, but not all, of the mystery of human suffering is solved in the sequence of events.

And what do we mean by the term "sequence of events"? We mean what we think Christ meant when

He said to Peter, as stated in the first member of our text, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." I think that Jesus meant to convey to Peter's mind the assurance that the succession of events in the flow of time would clear up many of the mysteries and solve many of the problems of this life, though not all of them—not all of them. Of certain events accomplished, later, under the eyes of the apostles, we read, "These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him" (John 12:16).

And so, still, in many of life's trying experiences, we cannot understand them at the time. In the thought of another: You each can remember how that, when a child, you so took to heart your griefs and disappointments that life seemed an existence of woe, and your trivial and transient sorrow made the world somber and forbidding. But of these childish troubles, how many of them remained beyond the hour that called them forth? How many of the griefs over which you sobbed yourself to sleep endured till the morning? How many of these are there of which as much as the memory of them remain to you now? (Coulson Kernahan.)

And, too, much of what we call evil—and which is evil at one stage of experience—is only good in disguise. "Hands that strike us, dogs that bite us, burdens that bow us down, disease that wastes us, are all

turned into blessings unawares." So wrote Mr. Wagner in *The Inner Way*. But we assume, in the interest of what we believe to be the exact truth, to alter Mr. Wagner's "all" into often; and which makes his statement to read, "Hands that strike us, etc., are often turned into blessings unawares." For, not all evils and woes are blessings in disguise, or, are blessings unawares. Far from it. Indeed, and unmistakably, many evils of life are not blessings at all, and never can be: they are maledictions, instead. We do accept it as true, however, that many of the evils of life, and some of the worst evils of life, are blessings unawares, or are transmuted into blessings. Nor, would we accept without similar qualifications, the lines in Tennyson's *In Memoriam:*

> We trust that somehow good
> Shall be the final goal of ill,
> For pangs of nature, sins of will,
> Defects of doubt and taints of blood.
>
> That nothing walks with aimless feet,
> That not one life shall be destroyed
> Or cast as useless to the wind
> When God shall make His pile complete.

We are not so sure of this: we wish we were, but we are not. And there is nothing in nature or science or the Bible to make us sure. We do not believe, we can not feel, that the "pangs of nature," "sins of will," "defects of doubt," and "taints of blood" shall evenmate in "good;" and we do not believe, we can not feel,

that *good* shall be the final issue and the goal of ill. Nay, not so with many evils of life. We agree with Dr. Van Dyke, that "Evil is not a step in a progress toward the ideal. It is a chasm which cuts us off from the ideal. The reason why it cuts us off is because it is contrary to God's will, through which alone the ideal can be realized." We can not disabuse ourselves of the deep-seated conviction that lives are, now and here, being destroyed, and are, actually being cast, if not useless to the wind, fruit-full to the whirlwind, and that the 'pile' of such fruitage to the whirlwind grows apace. No; these utterances, beautiful as they are, are too sweeping and universal to be accepted as they stand! And yet they do, each and both, contain this great and solemn, and most hopeful truth, and which is, that, in the broad sweep of events by which the losses and sufferings of one person eventuates in the advantage and enrichment of another, or of others, (for sometimes a multitude of persons are benefited and enriched by the sacrifice, or by the self-sacrifice of one) and by which the general good is conserved and promoted through the subordination of individual rights and personal well-being, is, as least, a partial explanation of this problem of human suffering. But only a partial explanation.

Vicarious suffering—the suffering of one in the place of another, or on behalf of another or others—is now, and always has been, the law of human progress. Ever has it been, even within the realm of material progress, that other men labored, or made cost to them-

selves, and we have entered into their labors and sacrifices. Thus has the human race moved on in its ascending spiral career. Martyrs and heroes and self-denying ones have been the real conservators of progress from age to age.

There is a still deeper truth to which this law of the sequence of events is related; it is, that suffering and pain are the guardians and promoters of human weal. In the actions and reactions of human experience, strange and contradictory and undesired as they are, suffering and pain have been the occasions and instruments of greatest benefaction. But for suffering and pain, much as we fain would be exempt from them, many humane and beneficent societies and forces and movements, and which are the glory of our times, had never come into existence. But for suffering and pain, the restraints that put bounds to cruel treatment of man and animal had probably not been known—vivisection had pursued, unchecked and unrestrained, its wanton ravages upon the realm of life and organization.

And but for the relief of suffering and pain, occasioned by disease and wounds, opiates and anesthetics, anti-toxins and antiseptic surgery, and all like achievements and discoveries within the realm of science—prolonging life, mitigating the horrors of war and disaster, and relieving the agonies of death, had never been sought for nor discovered. "We should, were it not for pain," says an old medical author and practitioner, "be running into the fire and be burned; swallow hot

fluids and be scalded; . . . allow foreign substances enter the eye and be blinded; we should, were it not for pain, be lulled to a false security, and allow disease to go unchecked and uncared for. . . . The sense of pain is a blessed provision of nature, and is designed for the protection, preservation and prolongation of life." The first aching of a diseased tooth is a reminder that the shortest road to the dentist is the surest way of deliverance from future and greater pain. Says Paul Janet: "In order not to suffer we must have been incapable of enjoying; in order not to die, we ought not to have been called to live." * Says Sir John Lubbock: "To render ourselves insensible to pain we must forfeit also the possibility of happiness. Pain," he says, "is a warning of danger, a very necessity of existence. But for it—but for the warnings which our feelings (sensibilities) give us, the very blessings by which we are surrounded would soon and inevitably prove fatal." An old Eastern proverb puts it, "Pain is God's chiseling to produce His likeness." Pope expressed this same thought in the couplet—

> He who would be barred capacity of pain,
> Courts incapacity of bliss.

"We need affliction," says one, "as the trees need winter, that we may collect sap and nourishment for future blossoms and fruit. Sorrow is as necessary for the soul as medicine is to the body. The adversities of

**Final Causes*, p. 470.

today are a preparatory school for the higher learning."

And yet in the face of this testimony and much like it, and the beneficient results that have come, although unsought and undesired, from pain and suffering, Mr. Ingersoll used to scoff at the Christian's God who had made a world in which suffering and pain have, and always have had, and always will have, so large a place. "Why," said he, upon one occasion, "if I were a God, I could make a better world than this. I would make health catching and not disease." This seems profound logic; but it is not; it is, to the contrary, exceedingly shallow, instead. Mr. Ingersoll would have made health and happiness the normal and natural state of man in this world. But setting aside the conception of man as a moral being and his original state and endowments, it remains the unshaken conclusion of logic that an existence to which health and happiness were native, and supplied without reference to desert or effort, as gravitation or chemical combinations take place according to material laws, would likely mean, and could mean, nothing more and nothing higher than the colorless contentment of the beast of the stall, pampered and fattened for the slaughter. Nothing more, nothing higher, nothing other.

I read some time ago, the account of a man who had attained to the good old age of ninety-eight years and of whom it was claimed, as his crowning distinction, that "he had never been sick, had never married, and

had always smoked." What a record for nearly a hundred years of existence! What a record! Why, just as much might be said, in all sincerity and distinction, of some chimneys, that they have smoked for ninety-eight years, and are good smoke conductors still for many years to come; that they have never been married, have existed unto themselves, and have never had a sick day! What an achievement and a glory—for a smoke-stack!

Happiness, as says Sir John Lubbock, and as we all feel, is not the end of life, at least not the highest or the supreme end—much as we all desire happiness;—and health—desirable as health is—is not the highest desideratum of existence. But character is. Earthly happiness is not the end of existence, although many seek it as though it were. "It is the law of God," declares Dr. Van Dyke, "that they who will be happy never shall be—never shall clasp the phantom after which they run so eagerly." We take a decided issue with a writer in one of our religious journals wherein he says, "No man can rightly call himself a Christian who is not happy." With no more dogmatism but far more reason we may assert the opposite, that, things being as they are in this world, "No man can rightly call himself a Christian who is completely happy."

The spectacle of woe and want and wretchedness that abounds, everywhere, forbids too large and too abiding subjective peace. Not happiness but the attainment of a good character is the highest end of life.

To get a living, or to live in peace of mind and contentment, is not to live the truest life. And it is the great lesson that comes to us out of experience, observation, and history that character may be attained notwithstanding the loss of earthly happiness, while afflicted with bodily infirmity, and in spite of physical evil. Nay, more, the loss of health, bodily affliction, and the blighting of happiness, may, and, in many instances, does, lead the soul to the highest attainments of character.

It is the law of the moral nature that freedom of action involves, of necessity, the possibility of wrong action—the liability or exposure of making a choice of evil; and it is the acting under an alternative, and thus the possibility of making a right choice, that constitutes the very soul of character. And God is more concerned, we may believe, for the character that accrues from conformity of life and conduct to right choices, than He is for our complacency, for our freedom from pain and suffering, or for our present happiness.

And who, of us all, but can truly say that the good of our life has been and is greater than the evil? Who of us but can say, that the gladness and the sunshine, after all, are more than the darkness and the grief? The trouble with most of us is, that we count and record the ills and evils of life we suffer, and do not note our blessings. Said Margaret DeLand, "When I don't sleep, I just count my blessings. That's a splendid thing to do, because you fall to sleep

before you get to the end of them." The injunction of the singer is—

> Think of all your mercies, such a boundless store,
> Tears will change to praises as you count them o'er.

Some one has said, that, "For every tear that starts to the eye, our lips should have worn a thousand smiles. Love and friendship and little children, fields and flowers, sea and sky, sunshine and starlight, have made life glad and beautiful."

"If every day were May-Day
With flowers all ablow
And in the very hey-day
Of loveliness aglow;
If every day were May-Day
With bird-song everywhere,
And every day a gay day
Without a sign of care;
If the sun were always shining
In a sky forever blue,
We all would fall a-pining
For clouds of somber hue;
We'd tire of endless May-Day
And suns forever bright
And hail a restful gray-day
With unalloyed delight;
And though we ask thee yet to pause,
Thou fairest of the year,
We love thee all the more because
Thou art not always here."*

*Marco Morrow in *May-Day Song.*

And all this is what we mean by the sequence of events, which, in the afterwards, becomes the solvent for many of the enigmas and sorely perplexing problems of life. In the hereafter of experience, or the broader vision that comes with time, we often come to know and see the divine Hand as we can not when the cloud is heavy and dark upon us. And we are assured in Holy Writ, and without other qualification than that we love God, that "All things work together for good." I once heard Mr. George Müller—that man of prayer and faith—of the Bristol Orphanage, England, say: "When God says all things, He means *all* things; not nine out of the ten, but the tenth as well; not the ninety-nine out of the hundred, but the hundredth as well; not the nine hundred and ninety-nine out of the thousand, but the thousandth as well, etc.; yes, all things means *all* things. "All things." "But," said Mr. Müller, "we may have to wait long to see them to be so; and of some things, we may never, in time and this life, be able to see how they are surely for our good; but they are, and sometime and somewhere—if not here, hereafter—we shall see, that it is even as God assures by His inspired Apostle, that, not many things, nor most things, nor some things, but that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

From the sublime assurance of faith that "All things work together for good to them that love God," it is suggested that the sequence of events is the solution for many of the mysteries of suffering, and thus we

come to that other—the ultimate and complete—solution of this problem, which is found alone in the conception and reality of a future existence, and which contains the harmonization for all this life's inequalities, its stubborn and unyielding mysteries, and its withheld completions. Another life is a demand of the intelligence as well as of faith. Wordsworth wrote, with more than poetic measure:

> Action is transitory—a step, a blow,
> The motion of a muscle—this way or that—
> 'Tis done;
> Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,
> And has the nature of infinity.
> Yet through the darkness (infinite though it seem
> And irremovable) gracious openings lie,
> By which the soul—with patient steps of thought
> Now toiling, wafted now on wings of prayer—
> May pass in hope, and though from mortal bonds
> Yet undelivered, rise with sure ascent
> Even to the fountain-head of peace divine.

And, says an old German writer:

> When stillness sinks on wood and meadow,
> And town and fields lie dusk in shadow,
> Man hears from out the darkling air
> The voices of a world elsewhere.*

The voices of that 'world elsewhere' have broken through the stillness and the gloom of earth, like friends calling through the dark, and these voices

*Quoted in *The Better Way*, p. 17.

that come from beyond the darkling air are, alone, the utterances which convey to the heart of man a comforting and satisfying solution—the only ultimate solution, as we believe, for this problem of human suffering.

Let others listen if they will, and hear if they can, other "voices"—the utterances of nature, the mute longings of the rational intuitions, or the communications from departed friends—for ourselves, the clearest of all the voices from "a world elsewhere" is the comforting voice of the Divine Spirit speaking in assuring revelation. It is a prophetic voice. Its utterance has to do with the future. It does not, indeed, answer all our questions; nor inform us concerning many things about which we would like so much to know; but it does tell us those things which are most worth our knowing. It does tell us that we *shall be,* and *where* we shall be, and *what* we shall be—that, because He, our Master, lives, we "shall live also"; and that we shall be "with Him," and "like Him." This revelation in the voice of the Divine Spirit is the "more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well that we take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." On the authority of the Christ, who was dead but is alive forevermore, believers are assured that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

To the devout believer, in all ages, and everywhere, the conception of another life, while it may not untie

nor unravel, it does cut the Gordian knot of this mystery. As believers, of every name, we may confess our common faith: "We live, even while in this world, with relation to the future world, with our supreme affections centered upon it; for our citizenship is in heaven." And since we hold to the common heritage of faith, that God is our Father, and that He is infinitely wise and good, and that, since He loves with an infinite affection, is too wise to err and too considerate of our good to keep us from pain, when pain is what we need, and since life is discipline and education, He may, and with truest wisdom and with the utmost beneficence toward us, call us to the ministration of disappointment, sorrow, and suffering, here, for the accomplishment of the highest ends of the character in this life and the loftiest purposes of His grace and of our glory in the world to come: and these ends and purposes, in the nature of the case, must lie, as yet, entirely beyond the grasp of our finite apprehensions. Of course He may; and of course He must, since He is God over all, and blessed forevermore, and we are His dear children!

Doubtless the deepest meaning of life is education. Life is probation: it is more than probation. Life is discipline: it is more than discipline. Life is more than probation *and* discipline: it is education—education through probation and discipline for a sublime destiny. In the education which life, itself is, discipline has its place. In education through discipline, sorrow and suffering *may be* indispensible—we dare not af-

firm;—but we may say, and without presumption, that sorrow and suffering are common and universal. We quote from F. W. Robertson: "Every son of man who would attain the true end of his being must be baptized with fire. It is the law of our humanity, as that of Christ, that we must be perfect through suffering. And he who has not discerned the divine sacredness of sorrow, and the profound meaning which is concealed in pain, has yet to learn what life is."

Most luminous, as to the educational meaning and value of discipline, are the words of Dr. C. C. Hall: "God can teach through anything, joy or sorrow, holiness or sin, life or death. Christ used anything and everything to serve His teaching purpose in His parables—birds and flowers, or drunken servants and cheating clerks. And God takes everything, even all the events of this broken order of sin and sorrow, and through the use of it in the hand of His Holy Spirit He teaches. Thus out of sorrow, out of sickness, out of death, evils of the natural order, what magnificent lessons have been learned in the school of grace; what friendships have been formed beneath the Cross; what power for usefulness has sprung into being from the side of the grave! And the end of the whole matter is: God is love. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. By man came death; by Christ have come life and power and hope; and to all who suffer in the flesh, God waits to be gracious, saying unto them continually, 'As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you'!"*

**Does God Send Trouble?* p. 20.

Listen to a fable of the possible refining influence of suffering:

> The lapidary sits 'mid dust and silence,
> And hears a voice from off the table
> Saying: "Save me, shield me!
> From the wasting and the labor,
> From the cutting and the grinding,
> From the pincers and the polish,
> From the motion that will burnish—
> Shield me, save me!"
>
> From the silence that succeeded,
> Came a voice that still impleaded,
> "I, too, would be shielded,
> From the wasting and the labor,
> From the cutting and the grinding,
> From the pincers and the polish,
> From the motion that will burnish,
> I, too, would be shielded, I—
> Only do, as best it seemeth!"
>
> With his pair of iron pincers
> He did grasp the gem Golconda,
> And, by the wasting and the labor,
> By the cutting and the grinding,
> By the motion that did polish,
> By the friction that did burnish,
> Came the Royal Kohinoor,
> Fit to grace the crown of princes.

It was in the light of this fundamental conception of the Christian faith that God is our Father, and that He will do for us, as far as we will let Him, that which is for our good, both here and hereafter, that the

Apostle declared, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared," or to be considered or even mentioned, "with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

And what is the proper line of conduct for us now, in view of this ultimate conception of the Christian faith? What? Why, this, we think, in the beautiful picture drawn by Mr. Wagner: "You are a cabin-boy on board a vast ship, of whose very dimensions you are ignorant. But you have your orders to execute at your post. Act, under all circumstances, according to the best light you have, and loyally. Then you will surely be in the line pointed out by him at the helm. The ship is staunch, the Captain is good. You may trust them both. No real evil can happen to you or yours. The rudest storm-burst is but an incident of the passage. The will which guides us, and against which nothing shall prevail, is, that not one of us should perish. Even the hairs of our head are numbered. Labor and strive in the sweat of your brow, and then lean on the Eternal. And if sometimes you must say with tears, 'Thy will be done,' because you are wounded and your heart is sore, you will not say it as one overcome by grief and resigned to its domination, but as the vanquished of to-day, sure of future victory." *

And, moreover, it is the testimony of universal Christian experience, that, from the grave-side of our hardest trials we have risen to the grandest achieve-

**The Better Way*, pp. 149, 150.

ments of the divine life. And so, not only with us of this generation, but across the long and weary centuries. For, from prison cells and fiery stakes, from bloody blocks and beds of languishing, from disappointed hopes and from beside open graves, there have come the richest experience of the love of God and of His supporting power, the noblest witnesses of resignation to His will, and the fullest consciousness and assurance that He doeth all things well! Blessed be His name!

And then, when the morning of Eternity has dawned upon us at last, and we shall have come, through God's good grace, to stand forth as children newly risen at the break of day to behold the beauty of the dawn—strong in the consciousness of the life forever freed from the bondage of corruption, and made beautiful and complete in the image of God—then, ah then, our bitterest woe of earth, forever past, shall seem of "as little moment to us as the tear which glistens in the eye of childhood even while the laugh leaps to the lips." Then shall the soul be forever freed from the ills that now assail and afflict it; then will the fact and experience of suffering be over; and then will the final end of suffering be attained, and attained forever. Weeping may endure for the night—and the night may be long and dark—but joy cometh in the morning. "Wherefore, comfort one another with these things."

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